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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Goşu, A., & Manea, O. (2015). The consequences of the militarization of Crimea for the wider Black Sea region. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 15(1), 9-20. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-446919>

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The Consequences of the Militarization of Crimea for the Wider Black Sea Region

ARMAND GOȘU, OCTAVIAN MANEA

2014 might be remembered as a full disclosure moment when Russia became an upfront challenger and spoiler of the post Cold War security order. The entire Eastern Frontier of NATO and its near abroad, especially the wider Black Sea region, are once again theaters of intense geopolitical contestation. But the nature of this competition is significantly different at a time when the balance between the forces of denial and forces of control favors increasingly the former¹. The immediate consequence of these maturing security trends is that the reliability of the US traditional approach to project power is questioned². In fact, Russia is already capitalizing on this “broad structural change in the technological environment of defense” aiming to impose its own zone of exclusion that keeps NATO’s presence at bay³. In the post Crimea’ annexation security environment, there is an increasing observable alignment between Russian intentions and Russian capabilities, a volatile combination that is already affecting the wider Black Sea region. Before the Northern Flank (the wider Baltic Sea region) the credibility of the Alliance might be probed firstly in the Black Sea.

The Seizure of Crimea as A Regional Game-Changer

While holding talks in Kiev with Ukrainian high officials, General Philip Breedlove, NATO's top military commander, told the local press that he was worried about the “militarization of Crimea... that the capabilities in

¹ Jan van Tol, “A2/AD-What Is It and How Would It Work in Central Europe?”, CEPA, December 2014: “In an era of precision warfare, it will be far easier and cheaper to deny warfare domain -air, seas, land, space or cyberspace- than it is to maintain control of or within them”.

² Remarks of Robert Work, Deputy Secretary of Defense, during Defense One Summit, November 25th, 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/11/watch-defense-one-summit-here/99911/>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

³ This is a snapshot that Paul Bracken developed in his book about Asia (*Fire in the East. The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age*, Harper Collins, 2000), but one that is increasingly applicable also to the post-Crimea annexation Black Sea region.

Crimea that are being installed will bring effect to almost the entire Black Sea”⁴. In its consequences, Crimea's absorption by Russia changes the current balance of forces in the Black Sea.

In the future, even if a new base is built near the port of Novorossiisk, consolidating the position of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Crimea would still be the center of gravity of the Russian military footprint, consolidating its ability to project force deep into the Mediterranean. The military facilities in the peninsula will be supplemented, as President Vladimir Putin promised on 23 September 2014, while visiting Crimea. He said that 80 new ships would bolster the capability of the Russian fleet by 2020, with 206 additional support ships. A gigantic rearming program worth \$700 billion, already running, was meant to radically change the Russian armed forces, including the Black Sea Fleet, in tatters after the break up of the USSR. The military Black Sea Fleet will be beefed up by 6 new frigates and 6 submarines.

The Russian rearming programme was launched after the war against Georgia by Anatoli Serdiukov, the minister of defence at that time. According to this programme, Russian army will receive over the next decade 100 warships, 1.000 aircrafts, 1.000 helicopters, 14.000 vehicles, 56 batteries of the S-400 anti-aircraft and anti-missile system, 10 batteries of S-500 surface to air missile systems and runs a complex programme for modernisation of the Russia's nuclear forces. Parts of this programme are threatened by EU and US sanctions⁵.

The rearming of the Russian fleet will shift the balance of power in the Black Sea from a slight superiority of NATO forces (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania) to Russian military superiority⁶. The seizure of Crimea deals a heavy blow to Ukraine's naval potential, pushing almost completely the Ukrainian fleet out of the Black Sea. The loss of the 50 Ukrainian military sites in Crimea weakens Kiev's military potential. Ukrainian military capabilities are poorer not only by the 57 military ships lost to Russia as a result of the Crimean occupation, but also by the loss of 20% of air force and air defense capabilities. If Moscow continues its State Program of Armaments by the year 2020, and this

⁴ Press Availability of General Philip M. Breedlove, Commander, U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, of NATO Allied Command Operations, Kyiv, Ukraine, November 26, 2014: “We are concerned that the capabilities in Crimea that are being installed will bring effect to almost the entire Black Sea. [...] Coastal defense cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles and other capabilities that are able to exert military influence over the Black Sea”. <http://ukraine.usembassy.gov/statements/breedlove-pressavail-kyiv-11262014.html>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

⁵ Sanctions have reduced the possibility of acquiring new technologies especially in electronics and computers. Anna Maria Dyner, “The Modernisation of the Russian Army: Too Ambitious for the Local Defence Industry”, PISM Bulletin, no. 31 (763), 20 March 2015. (www.pism.pl).

⁶ Andrzej Wilk, “The Military Consequences of the Annexation of Crimea” (2014-03-19), www.osw.waw.pl, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

program is not met with a response from NATO states on the Black Sea, the Russian fleet will become the most important force in the basin.

Russian troops in Crimea should be estimated to number 26.000-28.000 in March 2015, including approximately 13.000 of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Other estimates the number of Russian troops in Crimea between 29.000 and 40.000⁷.

At the same time, Moscow is no longer limited by the Russian Ukrainian agreement of 1997, which regulated the stationary units of the Armed Forces of Russian on Ukrainian territory. The money spent by Russia on the rent, \$97 million US, will now be invested by Moscow in other military programs. The defense budget will go up in 2015, reaching 4.2% of the GDP, a record for the transition period. The budget for the intelligence services is practically double the defense budget. By comparison, the 2013 defense budget was 3.2%, and 3.4% in 2014⁸. Russia's military program also supposes the restoration of dozens of military bases and airports abandoned after the break up of the Soviet Union, as well as building new military garrisons, not only in Crimea, but also in Belarus and Kyrgystan.

Since 2013, the Russian armed forces have been constantly holding military exercises, one after another. They last longer and longer, and the human resources, military equipment and military technology involved are greater and greater. For instance, The East – 2014, held in September in the far east of Russia, involved, according to official data, 150.000 soldiers, of which 6.500 reservists, 1.500 tanks, 4.000 armored combat vehicles, 632 aircraft and 84 warships. These maneuvers were held in the Pacific, but during the same period, tactical exercises for the Baltic Fleet were held in Kaliningrad with the participation of 1.000 soldiers and 280 combat vehicles⁹.

Recently, between March 16th-21st 2015, Russia organized unplanned military exercises in the Northern and Western military districts. These involved around 38.000 troops, 3.360 combat vehicles, 41 warships, 15 submarines, 110 aircraft and helicopters. A special attention was dedicated to the Arctic region by concentrating troops in Murmansk¹⁰. In the meantime,

⁷ Igor Sutyagin, "Russian Forces in Ukraine", Briefing Paper, RUSI, March 2015 (www.rusi.org). According to Sutyagin, in eastern Ukraine (Donbass), in the summer 2014, were involved in the military actions 6.000-6.500 Russian servicemen and approximately 10.000 at the moment of direct Russian involvement in December 2014. The number of Russian troops operating in Donbass was approximately 9.000 by the end of February 2015.

⁸ Pavel Felgenhauer, "Preparing for War Against the US on All Fronts – A Net Assessment of Russia's Defense and Foreign Policy Since the Start of 2014", Eurasia Daily Monitor, vol. 11, issue 183, October 16, (www.jamestown.org), accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

⁹ Andrzej Wilk, "Is Russia Making Preparations for a Great War?" (2014-09-24), www.osw.waw.pl.

¹⁰ "Vnezapnaja proverka beogotovnosti VS RF zavershena", 21.03.2015, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150321/1053784226.html, accessed on March 21st, 2015.

other 1.000 troops were participating in an exercise organized in Sakhalin Island, in Pacific. The exercises also includes more than 300 pieces of T-72 tanks, SU-24 attack bombers and Mi-8 helicopters¹¹.

We get almost daily news about new successes involving Russian missiles, which always hit their target. Russian military pilots harass jetliners from neighboring countries, and it is to be expected that the Russian Navy will deploy in a similar posture.

The Role of Crimea in the Broader Russian National Security Mindset

Contemporary Russian strategic culture seems to be deeply influenced by a national security narrative shaped by Russian leaders' view on their own history. In this reading, Crimea is more than a peninsula, having a special symbolic value for Russia. It is present in school textbooks, in Lev Tolstoi's *Sevastopolskie Rasskazy*, celebrating the heroism of the Red Army which defended Crimea during WWII.

In fact, the first direction of expansion for the founder of the Russian Empire, Peter the Great, was southwards, to the shores of the Azov and Black seas, and towards Crimea. Moscow, "The Third Rome", was organically tempted to get closer geographically to the first two, meaning Constantinople and Rome, the warm seas, the Black and Mediterranean seas, not the frozen North.

In 1688, a Russian military campaign against the Tatars of Crimea failed. The same lack of success that the first siege of the Azov fortification met with in 1695, whose defences, one year later, were taken over by Peter the Great. Were it not for the peace at Carlowitz and the Northern War, Peter the Great would have probably concentrated his attention and resources on the Black Sea region over the following few years. However, the 1711 defeat at Stănilești, in the Pruth River Campaign, when the Czar himself was miraculously saved (Oriental corruption played a determining role in this), froze for half a century Russia's expansionist projects in the Black Sea area. It was as late as 1771 that Catherine the Great occupied Crimea, which she formally annexed 12 years later, in 1783. For the following 200 years, the Black Sea region remained the center of attention for the political, military, and art elite, penetrating deeply the Russian and Soviet public consciousness, whether we talk about the Russian-Turkish wars, the Crimean War or the Black Sea Straits.

If in the 18th century the game changer in the Black Sea area was the annexation of Crimea by Catherine the Great, in 2014 Russia's seizure and

¹¹ "1,000 Russian Military Personnel Involved in Tactical Drills on Sakhalin" (20.03.2015), www.sputniknews.com, accessed on March 20th, 2015.

annexation of Crimea was a game changer not only for the larger Black Sea region, but for the entire global security system. Now, in February 2014, the trigger was a fear that a pro-Western government in Kiev would allow NATO to take control of the naval base at Sevastopol, which would have ended the Russian Black Sea Fleet and force projection into the Mediterranean.

In the end the annexation of Crimea is intimately linked with how Russian elites perceive the status of Ukraine itself. Many of those that are now part of Russia's foreign security and policy apparatus, came up intellectually reading Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*, a book published for the first time in 1997, and several subsequent editions, in issues of tens and hundreds of thousands of copies, for whom Ukraine's independence was a geopolitical catastrophe, a situation to be rectified right away¹². At the same time, Ukraine is the centerpiece of the project that President Putin brought with him to the Kremlin upon his return in 2012 whose aim is the founding of the Euro-Asiatic Union.

What happened over the past year in Crimea will have a formative influence on security arrangements in the wider region, from the Black Sea, Caucasus, and Eastern Balkans to the Mediterranean. The US and NATO can no longer count on ruling the waves of the Black Sea, or on being uncontested in the Mediterranean.

Larger Global Trends

The seizure of Crimea comes at a particular moment, in the context of an increasing contested global environment, where the insidious challengers of American power like Beijing and Moscow have started to build weapon systems able to counteract the technological comparative advantages that provided U.S. the ability to control land, air, space and sea. In fact, China and Russia are developing a vanguard of denial capabilities – anti-ship, anti-air, counter-space, cyber, electronic warfare – aimed at U.S. traditional advantages. This is the reality that consumed the top Pentagon leadership during the past year. In September 2014, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel gave a speech in Rhode Island where he highlighted the special features of the long-term,

¹² Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskie budushee Rossii*, Izd. Artogea, Moskva, 1997, p. 348: "Ukraine's sovereignty is such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, in principle, it can easily burst into armed conflict. [...] Ukraine as an independent state manifesting territorial ambitions is a great danger for the whole of Eurasia, and without solving the problems raised by Ukraine, any discussion of continental geopolitics is rendered pointless. [...] It is an absolute imperative in Russian Black Sea geopolitics for Moscow to have total and unmitigated control over the entire territory from Ukraine to Abkhazia [...] The northern coast of the Black has to be exclusively Eurasian and under Moscow's centralized control".

comprehensive military modernization programs assumed by China and Russia that

“appear designed to counter traditional U.S. military advantages – in particular, our ability to project power to any region across the globe by surging aircraft, ships, troops, and supplies. All this suggests that we are entering an era where American dominance on the seas, in the skies, and in space – not to mention cyberspace – can no longer be taken for granted”¹³.

The immediate consequence is that the maturation of these anti-access (A2)¹⁴ and area-denial (AD)¹⁵ postures will make it harder for the US to deploy, project power, gain access and even operate in certain theaters. As the National Defense Panel report of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review concluded: [this] “will make it difficult for U.S. forces to gain entry to and maneuver within areas that once were relatively secure”¹⁶. At the same time the credibility of U.S. deterrence umbrella, but also the capability to enforce international law and the global rules of the road (like freedom of the seas) are also under question:

“Without our superiority, the strength and credibility of our alliances will suffer. Our commitment to enforcing long-established international law, rules of the road, and principles could be doubted by both our friends and our adversaries”¹⁷.

For Europe, the crisis of the expeditionary model, a key ingredient of the Euro-Atlantic collective security system, suggests that the reassurance package adopted under the Wales summit and based on the spearhead force inside the NRF (NATO Response Force) – in itself a power projection component – is no longer enough. The Wales summit solution made sense in a time when the environment that should have received the NATO reinforcements was highly permissive and Western power projection capabilities were unchallenged. Today, the assumption of a highly permissive environment no

¹³ “Defense Innovation Days” – keynote speech delivered by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Newport, Rhode Island, Wednesday, September 03, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1877>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

¹⁴ “Those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering in an operational area”, in Sam Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare. Countering A2/AD strategies*, Naval Institute Press, 2013.

¹⁵ “Those actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed to limit its freedom of action within the operational area”, in Sam Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare. Countering A2/AD strategies*, Naval Institute Press, 2013.

¹⁶ The National Defense Panel Review’s report of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, co-chaired by William J. Perry and John P. Abizaid, p. 21.

¹⁷ Reagan National Defense Forum Keynote as delivered by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA, Saturday, November 15, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1903>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

longer holds, mainly because Russia is fielding comprehensive counter-intervention capabilities that have real potential to keep NATO's expeditionary forces at bay. To many observers, the emergence of access-denial capabilities is transforming also the way the Eastern Flank should be secured:

“Everyone who has been in the power projection business now faces the same problem, which is that in a crisis dispatching expeditionary forces may be highly destabilizing and in a conflict it may be simply impossible because those forces would not have protected ports and airfields they could flow into. I am skeptical of the whole idea of a super-rapid reaction force because it fails to understand the changing military competition and the security environment. To meet these challenges there is no substitute for forward-based forces. The force will either be there before the crisis and conflict or I have doubts if it will ever get there”¹⁸.

Black Sea as a Russian A2/AD Lake

The seizure of Crimea, with all the game changing consequences for the wider Black Sea region, comes at a particular moment in time when the traditional US approach for projecting power on a global scale (the ability to gain access, operate and be forward present in key strategic regions of the world) is increasingly marked by an existential crisis.

The current and prospective shopping list announced by Moscow for boosting its military assets in Crimea suggests that the Black Sea region is gradually entering in the age of A2/AD trends. Overall, by the end of the decade, Moscow plans to spend US \$151 billion to modernize its navy and the Black Sea Fleet. The modernization will emphasize the emergence of a counter-intervention capability for the Black Sea along the lines of A2/AD logic, including submarines, anti-ship, anti-surface and anti-air capabilities. At the same time, the annexation of Crimea will add long range land-based missile systems (like S-400 SAM system), S-300 platforms, but also the Iskander surface-to-surface missiles that have an operational range of 400-kilometer¹⁹. By the end of the decade, Russia's Black Sea force will tally 206 ships²⁰. By 2016, the Black Sea Fleet will receive six brand-new Kilo-class submarines that will be stationed in a new base at Novorossiisk²¹. In addition, Tu-22M3 long-

¹⁸ Personal interview with Jim Thomas, Vice President at the *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)*, October 2014, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Matthew Bodner, “Russia's Black Sea Fleet Will Get 80 New Warships to Repel NATO”, *The Moscow Times*, September 23rd, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-s-black-sea-fleet-will-get-80-new-warships-to-repelato/507682.html>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

range strategic bombers will be deployed in the region²². In short, the annexation of Crimea is already shifting the geography of control in the wider Black Sea region. In the past, the Black Sea used to be called a Russian lake; now it is becoming an A2/AD Russian bubble.

But why is this a threat for the regional security? History shows that when a regional power driven by a revisionist agenda has achieved a certain self-aware security immunity level, by developing a nuclear shield or an A2/AD umbrella, it may become more incentivized to disrupt the local status-quo, it may be emboldened to low-cost revisionism through low-intensity conflict. In the past, it was the case of Pakistan that under the new found nuclear umbrella started to employ sub-conventional assets aimed at India's ability to control the Kashmir province:

“Nuclearization has both enabled and emboldened its use of militancy.[...] The development of first a covert and then an overt nuclear capability appears to have enabled Pakistan to pursue the boldest aspects of its proxy strategy with confidence that doing so will face few, if any, important consequences”²³.

Arguably, it is also the case of the recent Chinese behavior and the sovereignty claims made over significant parts of its near-seas (South China and East China Seas). Apparently there are two strategic complement realities at play in East Asia today²⁴. On one side, there is the maturation of the Chinese A2/AD bubble aiming to create “a deep maritime and air buffer zone beyond its coast”²⁵ that gives Beijing the potential to defend its near-abroad, but also the ability “to dominate waters near Taiwan and in the South and East China seas”²⁶ by keeping a US presence at bay. On the other side, protected by this A2/AD umbrella, China has become more incentivized to gradually alter the geography of the region, operating under the threshold of a formal *casus belli*. The recent developments in the South China Sea (the increased Chinese assertiveness near

²² Igor Delanoe, “Russia's Plans for Crimea: the Black Sea Fleet”, Russian International Affairs Council, July 23rd, 2014, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/igor_delanoe/?id_4=1305, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

²³ More on this in C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan's Army Way of War*, Oxford University Press, 2014. Of particular interest it is chapter 9, “Jihad Under the Nuclear Umbrella”, p. 250/251.

²⁴ Interview with Robert Haddick, October 2014: “On one side there is salami-slicing, gradual, slow accumulation of small changes creating new facts on the ground in the East and South China Seas in order to patiently expand their zone of influence there. The second part of it is the creation of certain military capabilities that make it very difficult for an expeditionary power like US to take any kind of actions to roll back the previous Chinese accumulations that they gained through the salami slicing”.

²⁵ Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water. China, America and the Future of the Pacific*, Naval Institute Press, September 2014.

²⁶ James Steinberg, Michael O'Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: U.S. China Relations in the Twenty First Century*, Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 105.

Spratly and Paracel island groups but also the Scarborough Reef), as well as the establishment of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea in November 2013, seem to validate the hypothesis that a revisionist power that has acquired an A2/AD proficiency level is also more likely to be emboldened to challenge the regional status-quo through insidious salami-slicing tactics and sub-conventional scenarios²⁷. In particular, the activation of the Chinese ADIZ was interpreted as “an exercise in anti-access/area denial (A2/AD), what the Chinese term counter-intervention, in miniature”²⁸.

The seizure of Crimea might signal the beginning of a new stage: the slow motion crippling of the Western rules-based order through the emergence of regions of exceptionalism and exclusion that, as Henry Kissinger pointed out in his new book “question their validity in their present form and have made clear that they would work to modify them”²⁹. It might be a matter of time until a Black Sea keep-out zone will join other key regions of the world where traditional freedoms associated with the open commons are increasingly undermined by the assertiveness of mature A2/AD powers³⁰. In the Chinese case, there seems to be a correlation between the gradual development of the A2/AD capabilities and the coercive salami-slicing tactics employed in the South China and East China Seas. Consequently, as Russia becomes a mature A2/AD power it may also employ similar sub-conventional irregular tactics inside the wider Black Sea by challenging the territorial waters of NATO littoral states through creative claims over their EEZs and energy perimeters, or through the activation of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) or imposing a maritime defense identification zone (MDIZ). Over the past year, through its actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, Russia demonstrated a clear intent to become a spoiler of the European security order and its core principles. Now beyond intentions, Russia seems to deploy niche capabilities that put in jeopardy the freedom of movement (with all the evident consequences for the

²⁷ The 2012 Scarborough Reef incident in particular highlighted a larger operational template and new unconventional ways to intimidate, coerce and compel short of using force in a traditional manner. The Scarborough Reef incident emphasize a new aggression and expansion pattern, what the PLA General Zhang Zhaozhong has called-the cabbage strategy, which means surrounding a contested territory with layers of walls using “so many boats — fishermen, fishing administration ships, marine surveillance ships, navy warships — that the island is thus wrapped layer by layer like a cabbage”. More details in Jeff Himmelman, “A Game of Shark And Minnow – Who Will Win Control of the South China Sea”, *The New York Times Magazine*, <http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2013/10/27/south-china-sea/>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

²⁸ Dean Cheng, “China’s ADIZ as Area Denial”, *The National Interest*, December 4th, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/chinas-adiz-area-denial-9492?page=2>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

²⁹ Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Penguin Press, 2014, p. 2.

³⁰ The National Defense Panel Review’s report of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, co-chaired by William J. Perry and John P. Abizaid, p. 11.

energy security of the region) and have the ability to transform the Black Sea in a no-go area by keeping at bay any NATO reinforcement presence³¹.

Conclusions

2014, provided a sentiment of disintegration of “any sense of a framework, an order, a system in which peace and stability could be restored”³². It is in this larger context that the collapse of the post-Cold War consensus, mainly the principles that created its foundation, happened. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1990 Paris Charter for Europe, the 1994 Budapest memorandum – the core features of the post-Cold War normative framework – all are in question. The problem is that “when you have a collapse of order, you can expect all kinds of things”.³³ For sure, assumptions about how we read and assess the regional security landscape need to change:

“It is no longer appropriate to have a mindset that thinks in the binary world of war and peace; campaign or contingency. The world is now in a permanent state of competition. We are in an age of continuous engagement.”³⁴

At minimum, NATO needs to revise its regional deterrence-by-denial posture. As such, the Alliance should start mirroring the Russian mindset by cultivating its own access/denial bubbles³⁵ along the Eastern border, in between the Baltic-Black Seas. In short, the Alliance needs to become an A2/AD actor. Particularly the CEE states should be incentivized to invest in layers of access-denial platforms capable of challenging the assumption of low-cost power grabs or the expectation of a light territorial *fait accompli*. In this broader context, a

³¹ All these different layers of long-range, anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles together with the long range S-400 land-based missile systems that will be deployed in Crimea suggest a “large spectrum of capability to strike ground targets, interdict maritime traffic and impose a no-fly zone.” (in Igor Delanoe, “Russia’s Plans for Crimea: the Black Sea Fleet”, Russian International Affairs Council, July 23rd, 2014, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/igor_delanoe/?id_4=1305, accessed on April 3rd, 2015)

³² George Packer, “The Birth of a New Century”, *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2014, p. 54.

³³ Interview with Toomas Hendrick Ilves, President of Estonia, December 22nd, 2014, <http://www.president.ee/en/media/interviews/10923-qwe-have-allowed-aggression-to-standq-the-american-interest/index.html>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

³⁴ Speech at RUSI’s Conference on the NATO Summit, September 2014 by General Sir Nicholas Houghton, Chief of the British Defence Staff.

³⁵ Interview with Jim Thomas, “Collective Defence in the Age of Anti-Access Bubbles”, Small Wars Journal, November 16th, 2011, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/interview-with-jim-thomas-collective-defence-in-the-age-of-anti-access-bubbles>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

special attention should be focused on developing the A2/AD capabilities (land, sea and undersea) of the Black Sea NATO member states. Over time, the standard reality on the NATO's Eastern Flank should be closer to George Kennan's snapshot: "We must be like the porcupine who only gradually convinces the carnivorous beast of prey that he is not a fit object of attack"³⁶.

In the age of hybrid threats, the time has come for a NATO rebalance/pivot on the Eastern Flank through a more even distribution of its military infrastructure and assets beyond the Fulda Gap and the geographical boundaries of the Cold War alignment, across the New Europe. Such a move will respond to the security deficit created by the existing outdated defense-in-depth model³⁷ at the core of NATO. In this logic, the Alliance will opt for a flexible preclusive defense posture³⁸ based on a balanced mix of small sub-conventional and conventional units. A special role in this revised regional posture should be attributed to local rapid reaction forces as the one developed this year by Lithuania whose main mission-menu is focused on countering hybrid warfare threats³⁹. At the same time, NATO needs to invest in sub-conventional deterrence in order to counter-act the kind of ambiguous aggression that was particularly used in Ukraine. In this context, the Alliance should actively building on the trend that Russia is also exploiting that of merging precision weapons with irregular warfare tactics:

"On one side, we need precision-guided artillery, mortars and missiles in the frontline areas; second is the sensor net that such forces need to have with aerial, space, terrestrial layers. So the question becomes how can we create that sensor grid across borders that can provide early warning and targeting information for highly distributed, highly irregular ground guerilla forces?"⁴⁰.

Ultimately the Alliance needs to restore its deterrence by punishment capital. In this context, NATO should borrow a page from the Cold War history

³⁶ A note that George Kennan made in his diary in the early days of the Cold War, quoted in Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove. Paul Nitze, George Kennan and the History of the Cold War*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2009, p. 100.

³⁷ Jakub Grygiel, A. Wess Mitchell, "Limited War is Back", *The National Interest*, August 28th, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/limited-war-back-11128>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

³⁸ *Idem*, "A Preclusive Strategy to Defend the NATO Frontier", *The American Interest*, December 2, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/12/02/a-preclusive-strategy-to-defend-the-nato-frontier/>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

³⁹ Rick Lyman, "Ukraine Crisis in Mind, Lithuania Establishes a Rapid Reaction Force", *New York Times*, December 19th, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/20/world/europe/lithuania-assembles-a-force-as-it-readies-for-whatever-russia-mayring.html>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.

⁴⁰ Personal interview with Jim Thomas, Vice President at the *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)*, October 2014, Washington, D.C.

and develop its own *offset strategy*⁴¹ and capabilities able to hold at risk a competitor's A2/AD umbrella. In the past, in key moments of the Cold War when new structural realities emboldened Russian belief in blitzkrieg victories, the offset strategies were a crucial variable in restoring the credibility of NATO's holding strategy:

“So, these strategies, containment, deterrence and offset strategy were the components of a broad holding strategy during the Cold War. I call it a holding strategy because it did not change the geopolitical conditions which led to the Cold War, but it did deter another World War and it did stem Soviet expansion in the world until the internal contradictions in the Soviet system finally caused the Soviet Union to collapse. The holding strategy worked”⁴².

We may need to be able to demonstrate that point once again.

⁴¹ For an excellent historical background on offset strategies and how it should look like a third US offset strategy read Robert Martinage's report, *Toward a New Offset Strategy. Exploiting U.S. Long-Term Advantages to Restore U.S. Global Power Projection Capability*, CSBA, 2014.

⁴² Speech of William J. Perry, “Changing National Strategy”, April 1997, <http://secure.afa.org/media/scripts/perry.asp>, accessed on April 3rd, 2015.